

## ADOPTION PROCEDURES

Attached are the forms needed to initiate an adoption of a minor child in this Court. Please fill out each form completely. **FORMS MUST BE TYPED** and all pleadings must be **signed in blue ink**. A petition and complete set of forms is required, with a deposit, for each child to be adopted.

### Court Costs

Court costs in each case can vary and therefore a deposit is required. If court costs at the conclusion of the adoption are more than the deposit, the balance must be paid at the time of final hearing. If court costs are less than the deposit, the difference will be refunded to you.

For deposit amount, please see "[Court Costs](#)" on the [Probate Information](#) page of our web site.

### Legal Representation

Representation by an attorney is recommended, but not required. If you choose to go forward without legal counsel, please understand that court personnel cannot give legal advice or information and cannot help you complete the forms.

### Consent

In a stepparent adoption, please be sure to include consents signed by both mother and father, or if consent cannot be obtained, the petition must include an address where notice of the adoption can be served on that individual by the Court. If the address of the party is unknown, service by publication may be necessary. To obtain service by publication, a request must be filed with the Court along with an affidavit stating you are unable to obtain a good address and what attempts have been made to do so.

If the father of the child to be adopted has not been established by a legal proceeding, you must request a search of the Ohio Putative Father Registry (no sooner than 31 days after the child is born). A certification of search will be sent to you by the Registry and the same must be filed with this Court prior to the adoption being granted. *Questions regarding this search or the Ohio Putative Father Registry should be directed to the Registry at 1-888-313-3100.*

In adoptions other than step-parent adoptions, the parents are required to appear before the Court to acknowledge their consent to an adoption. Parents are required to have birth parent counseling at least 72 hours before their consent is given.

### Accounts

A preliminary petitioner's account must be filed at the time of the filing of the petition showing all estimated costs. We will not be able to accept a petition for filing without this account. A final account is required 10 days prior to the final adoption hearing. **Neither account is required on STEPPARENT adoptions.**

### Home Investigation

A home investigation is required on all adoptions, including step-parent adoptions. Once your petition is filed with the Court, a hearing date will be scheduled and the assessor (court investigator), Kathleen Bates, will be ordered to investigate the adoptive home. The court assessor will then contact the petitioners to schedule a time to meet and advise what information will be needed for the investigation.

## **Hearing**

Adoption hearings are held on Monday mornings and a hearing will be scheduled no sooner than 30 days following the filing of the petition. Both the petitioner(s) and the child must be present for the court hearing.

A final adoption hearing cannot be held until the child has been in the home for six months. An interlocutory hearing can be held and a temporary order can issue prior to the six-month time frame, but please note that an additional home investigation will be required prior to the final order and will result in additional court costs.

## **Birth Certificates**

A *certified copy* of the child's birth certificate must be filed with the petition for adoption, along with a completed Vital Statistics form. Once the adoption is final, the Court will request a new birth certificate from the state changing the parental information and the child's name (if requested in the petition). The new birth certificate will be sent to the Court, copied and included in our file and the new original will be mailed to the petitioner(s) or counsel, if represented. This process can take anywhere from six weeks to two years and is not controlled by the Court.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** In step-parent or open adoptions, it is advisable for the petitioner(s) to obtain two (2) certified copies of the child's original birth certificate so that one can be retained after adoption for purposes of changing the child's Social Security records. The Social Security Administration requires identifying documentation relating the birth name to the adopted name. After the adoption has been completed, the Department of Health and the Court are not permitted by law to provide **any** identifying information.

If you have questions, please call: **Cheri Shaw** **740-687-7135**

## **ADOPTION CHECKLIST**

To initiate an adoption procedure, make sure you have the following at the time of filing:

- ✓ Petition for Adoption
- ✓ Consents
- ✓ Preliminary Account (**not required on step-parent adoptions**)
- ✓ *Certified copy* of child's birth certificate
- ✓ Vital Statistics Form, HEA 2757 (for new birth certificate)
- ✓ Proof of custody (if child is not in custody of a parent)
- ✓ Cash or check/money order payable to "Fairfield County Probate Court"

**Please note:** If you are working with an agency that will provide the home assessment, please notify the Court at the time of filing.

**10 days prior to final hearing** the following should be submitted to the Court:

- ✓ Final account (**not required for step-parent adoptions**)
- ✓ Balance of court costs.